

# ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE MEETING

The Sixth Commonwealth Health Ministers Meeting was held in the Arusha International Conference Centre, Tanzania, from 11 to 17 November 1980.

Formerly called Commonwealth Medical Conferences (the decision to change the title was made by Health Ministers at their previous conference in 1977), these meetings are held every three years. The previous five meetings have been held in Britain (Edinburgh, 1965), Uganda (Kampala, 1968), Mauritius (Port Louis, 1971), Sri Lanka (Colombo, 1974), and New Zealand (Wellington, 1977). The offer of the Government of Tanzania to host the 1980 Meeting was made in 1979 at the annual ministerial-level meeting of Commonwealth representatives prior to the World Health Assembly (the Pre-WHA Meeting), in Geneva, and was accepted with appreciation by other Commonwealth governments.

The theme - Health and the Family - and topics proposed for the Sixth Meeting were given preliminary consideration at the Pre-WHA Meeting in 1979. Together with the proposed administrative arrangements, they were also discussed by a Liaison Committee composed of representatives of Commonwealth governments in London in both 1979 and 1980. Liaison was maintained with World Health Organisation headquarters in Geneva, to ensure harmony with WHO thinking, and at the same time to avoid duplication. The provisional agenda for the Sixth Meeting, with annotations prepared by the Commonwealth Secretariat, was given final approval by the 1980 Pre-WHA Meeting, and the choice of the lead speaker was endorsed.

The administrative arrangements for the Arusha Meeting were made by the Commonwealth Secretariat in collaboration with the Tanzania Ministry of Health. The Commonwealth Secretary-General was responsible for the general organisation of the Meeting, and the Conference Secretary was Professor Sir Kenneth Stuart, the Secretariat's Medical Adviser. The Tanzania Government was responsible for the provision of facilities for the Meeting at the Arusha International Conference Centre, including office equipment, furniture, stationery and transport. It provided secretarial staff to reinforce the small Secretariat party, and liaison officers to assist delegates with arrival formalities, local excursions and air bookings for departure.

Heads of delegations and the Assistant Secretary-General (representing the Commonwealth Secretary-General who was unable to be present) were the guests of the Tanzania Government, which bore the cost of their accommodation and local excursions. The generous support, hospitality and co-operation provided by the Government of Tanzania were greatly appreciated by all delegations and by the Secretariat.

The Tanzania Minister of Health, Dr. the Hon. A.D. Chiduo, was elected chairman of the Meeting, which was attended by delegations from 29 countries. Twenty-two countries were represented by ministers. In addition, as at previous meetings, the Associated States of the Eastern Caribbean were jointly represented. Delegations included permanent secretaries, chief medical officers and senior staff of university medical schools. Observers from the World Health Organisation, the

Commonwealth Medical Association, the Commonwealth Nurses Federation and the International Planned Parenthood Federation were also present.

The Meeting was opened by the Tanzania Minister of Health on behalf of the Prime Minister of Tanzania. An address on behalf of the Commonwealth Secretary-General was given by the Assistant Secretary-General, Professor K.S. Murshid. A vote of thanks at the conclusion of the opening ceremony was proposed by the Hon. George Gair, Minister of Health of New Zealand, host country of the previous conference.

The President of the United Republic of Tanzania, H.E. Dr. Julius K. Nyerere, hosted a reception in honour of the Health Ministers on the opening day.

The plenary sessions began with the lead speech by Professor V. Ramalingaswami, Director-General of the Indian Council of Medical Research and President of the Indian National Science Academy. Country statements by heads of delegations followed. The main discussions then continued in three committees, each with a chairman and vice-chairman elected by the full Meeting. All regions of the Commonwealth were represented on each committee; the larger delegations were represented on all three committees and the smaller delegations were free to move between committees. The observers took part in the committee discussions.

On the eve of the opening ceremony, a preliminary meeting of heads of delegations formally adopted the agenda and programme for the Meeting and set up a steering committee consisting of the Chairman of the Meeting, the chairmen and vice-chairmen of committees and senior officials of the Secretariat. It was agreed that, following previous practice, a summary record of country statements made in plenary should not be prepared, but that the texts of speeches should be included together with the main report of the Meeting.

The responsibilities of the three committees were as follows:

**Committee A** Chairman: Dr. J.B. Senilagakali (Fiji).  
Vice-Chairman: Dr. Philip I. Boyd (Associated States of the Eastern Caribbean).

Agenda item I : Review of action taken following the Fifth Commonwealth Medical Conference.

Agenda item II : Reports of recent meetings  
(a) Medical-legal workshops  
(b) Special health problems: island developing and other specially disadvantaged countries.

**Committee B** Chairman: Dr. E.L. Harris (Britain).  
Vice-Chairman: Dr. Rilly Ray (Singapore)

Agenda item III : The family: its special characteristics and needs.

Agenda item IV : Community resources and their mobilisation.

Papers commissioned by the Secretariat on "The nutrition component of family health", "Nurses and midwives in relation to family

health", "Nutrition and family health in the Third World" and "Women in health" (documents CHMM 80/TT/2-5) and also a report prepared by the Canadian Nurses Association on "Putting health into health care" were assigned to this committee for discussion.

Committee C Chairman: Dr. M. Dlamini (Swaziland).  
Vice-Chairman: Dr. Raj Karim (Malaysia).

Agenda item V : National health and health education policies.

Agenda item VI : Administration and priorities in relation to family health.

This committee was asked to pay particular attention to community health education and the media, and to a paper prepared by WHO on the national health development network.

The reports of the three committees were presented and considered when the Meeting reassembled in plenary. With certain minor amendments, they were then adopted as the formal report of the Meeting. The Secretariat was asked, while respecting the substance of the conclusions and recommendations of the report, to use editorial discretion in integrating certain inevitable overlapping material when preparing the report for publication.

A closing speech on behalf of the Commonwealth Secretary-General was made by the Assistant Secretary-General before the closing remarks of the Chairman.

During the Meeting two separate meetings of the representatives of East, Central and Southern African countries and of South Pacific countries were held to discuss health cooperation in their respective regions.